



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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29th Annual Veterans Wheelchair Games Scheduled for Spokane

WASHINGTON – A wide range of disabilities cannot stop more than 500 of America's greatest wheelchair athletes, all U.S. military Veterans who will begin competition at the 29th National Veterans Wheelchair Games being held July 13-18 in Spokane, Wash.

"President Obama recently said that caring for Veterans and their families is a matter of honor as a nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "The National Veterans Wheelchair Games highlight our nation's commitment to our wounded heroes. The Games also allow those Veterans to teach us all the meaning of heroism, determination and comradeship."

The Games are presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

"The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are the biggest annual wheelchair sports event in the world," said Randy L. Pleva Sr., national PVA president. "From quad rugby to handcycling, power soccer to wheelchair slalom, the Games are an exciting combination of competition, camaraderie and courage."

At the Games, Veterans will compete in 17 different sports, including air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field, handcycling, nine-ball, a motorized wheelchair relay, power soccer, quad rugby, softball, swimming, table tennis, track and field, trapshooting, weightlifting and wheelchair slalom. For the third year, stand-up events will be held in archery and table tennis for athletes who have amputations and choose to compete using prosthetic devices instead of their wheelchairs.

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PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Wheelchair Games 2/2/2/2

The Games are an annual multi-event sports rehabilitation program open to U.S. military Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations or certain neurological problems and who receive care at VA medical facilities or military treatment centers.

The 29th National Veterans Wheelchair Games begin July 13 with a wheelchair basketball demonstration in Riverfront Park in downtown Spokane, as well as the 2009 Disabled Sports, Recreation and Fitness Expo. Kids Day at the Games takes place July 17 at Spokane Falls Community College, where local children with disabilities will meet the athletes and learn about wheelchair sports. Track and field events, softball and archery will also take place at the college.

This year's opening ceremonies will be held at Veterans Arena in Spokane, while closing ceremonies are at the Spokane Convention Center, where many of the week's competitive events will take place. Other events will be held at Lilac Lanes, North Bowl, Esmeralda Golf Course, Whitworth University, the Spokane Gun Club and other area venues. Admission is free to the public, and the community is encouraged to attend.

Sports are important in the therapy used to treat many disabilities. For many injured Veterans, the Wheelchair Games provide their first exposure to wheelchair athletics. VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitative and recreational therapies, and operates more than 1,400 sites of care, including 153 medical centers.

Founded in 1946, Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only congressionally chartered Veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of people with spinal cord injury or disease. It is a dynamic, broad-based organization with more than 19,000 members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The Spokane VA Medical Center and the Northwest Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America are hosting the 2009 Games. Veterans competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games come from nearly every state, as well as Puerto Rico and Great Britain.

For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games or to volunteer during the week, visit the Games Web site at www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.

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